



For immediate release

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City Hall's new severe weather shelter protecting homeless persons on coldest nights

SEATTLE — As winter arrives in the Northwest, City Hall's new severe weather shelter is open and serving an average of 41 homeless persons a night.

The shelter has opened its doors to the homeless 11 nights since Thanksgiving.

"It's a relief to know that we can provide additional warm, dry, and safe beds for the people who need them on our coldest and stormiest nights," said Mayor Greg Nickels.

The City of Seattle spent \$507,000 to renovate a part of City Hall and create the shelter, which sleeps up to 75 men and women. Renovations included heating, ventilation, lighting, bathrooms, tiles, painting and security cameras.

When severe weather hits or is predicted, the Seattle Human Services Department's Survival Services manager authorizes the opening of additional shelter space in facilities not normally used for shelter. Survival Services staff notify the year-round homeless service providers when they plan to open additional facilities so that providers can refer people seeking shelter to a protected sleeping place. Severe weather means a temperature drop to below 32 degrees, snow, or heavy rain.

In addition to the City Hall site, which is operated by the Salvation Army, the city funds a severe weather shelter for 25 women at the Frye Hotel. The Union Gospel Mission and Bread of Life Mission also offer an extra 25 beds each on severe weather nights.

The severe weather beds are in addition to over 2,200 year-round shelter beds in Seattle, 1,200 of them funded by the city, and the 127 winter-only beds available October 1-March 31 each year.

The severe weather shelter now located at City Hall has been moved repeatedly since it was first opened at the Seattle Center in the late 1990s. It has been located at the Public Safety Building, which was torn down, and at the armory at South Lake Union. Last winter, it was located at the Seattle Housing Authority's Yesler Terrace. The new City Hall site will continue to serve as a severe weather shelter until another site is found in or near downtown.

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